

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8668

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1229

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, CB, UY

SUBJ: REQUEST FOR ASYLUM FOR CAMBODIANS

REFS: A) STATE 84161; B) STATE 85373

1. SUMMARY: KHMER AMBASSADOR ONG REQUESTED GUIDANCE WITH RESPECT TO REMOVING HIS THREE-MAN MISSION FROM URUGUAY. GIVEN PECULIAR FAMILY SITUATIONS, ONG AND BOTH HIS SUBORDINATES WISH TO RELOCATE IN THE U.S. WHILE THEY WILL NEITHER BE IN DIRE ECONOMIC STRAITS FOR ANOTHER FEW WEEKS, NOR FORCED TO LEAVE BY THE GOU, THEY HAVE SUFFERED GRIEVOUSLY FROM EVENTS IN THEIR COUNTRY AND I WOULD APPRECIATE PROMPT GUIDANCE SO AS TO ALLEVIATE THEIR UNCERTAINTIES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

2. KHMER AMBASSADOR ONG KHUY TRENG CALLED ON ME APRIL 15 TO REQUEST GUIDANCE, POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE AND ASYLUM FOR OFFICIALS OF THE KHMER EMBASSY IN MONTEVIDEO. ONG SAID HE BELIEVED HIS GOVERNMENT'S COLLAPSE WAS IMMINENT AND THAT THE ONLY REALISTIC COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO HIM WAS TO TRY TO ARRANGE THE PROMPT DEPARTURE OF HIS ENTIRE MISSION FROM URUGUAY. HE SAID GOU CHIEF OF PROTOCOL ROMERO HAD CALLED ON HIM APRIL 14 ON INSTRUCTIONS TO EXPRESS SYMPATHY FOR THE KHMER PEOPLE AND KHMER STAFF HERE ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT BORDABERRY AND FONMIN BLANCO. ROMERO TOLD ONG THAT HE AND HIS PEOPLE COULD REMAIN IN URUGUAY IF THEY WISHED AND THAT GOU WOULD HELP IN WHATEVER WAY IT COULD IF THEY SHOULD DECIDE TO LEAVE.

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3. WHEN ASKED IF HE OR HIS STAFF WERE IN DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS,

ONG SAID THEY WERE NOT. EVEN THOUGH KHMER EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED NO FUNDS FROM PHNOM PENH SINCE 1974, HE HAD ECONOMIZED CAREFULLY AND HE AND HIS STAFF COULD SURVIVE ECONOMICALLY FOR ABOUT A MONTH.

4. ONG SAID HE, FIRST SECRETARY SOM CHUON AND ATTACHE OUN LIENG CHEAT ALL WISHED TO GO TO THE U.S. ONG HAD BEEN MINISTER IN WASHINGTON FOR FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO COMING HERE IN 1973. HIS CHILDREN ARE ALL ENGLISH SPEAKING (ONE BORN IN THE U.S.) AND HAVE CONTINUED EDUCATION IN BRITISH SCHOOL IN MONTEVIDEO. SOM HAS SINGAPORAN WIFE WITH EHOM ONLY COMMON LANGUAGE IS ENGLISH. THEIR CHILDREN ALL ENGLISH SPEAKERS. MRS. SOM HAS RELATIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO AREA. OUN HAS NO RELATIVES OUTSIDE COMBODIA WITH EXCEPTION OF SOME IN SOUTH VIET NAM AND HE DOES NOT BELIEVE A MOVE TO SOUTH VIET NAM WOULD BE PROPITIOUS AT THIS TIME.

5. ALL THREE KHMER DIPLOMATS HAVE LARGE FAMILIES. THE AMBASSADOR HAS SEVEN CHILDREN RANGING FROM NINE MONTHS TO TWELVE YEARS, SOM HAS SIX RANGING FROM A FEW MONTHS TO 19 YEARS AND OUN HAS FIVE, ALL UNDER 13. IN ADDITION, OUN HAS ONE ADULT FEMALE CAMBODIAN SERVANT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THEIR FUTURE, AMBASSADOR ONG SAID HE AND SOM WERE CAREER DIPLOMATS (OUN WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN THIS CONTEXT) WHO HAD SERVED SIHANOUK AND THE GKR. FOR BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL REASONS THEY WOULD NOT SERVE THE COMMUNISTS. THEIR IMMEDIATE CONCERN WAS RELOCATION BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH URUGUAYANS AND GOU FRIENDLY, HELPFUL AND SYMPATHETIC, NONE OF THE CAMBODIANS SPEAK SPANISH AND THEY WOULD REMAIN ISOLATED. CONSIDERING U.S. TIES, LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES HERE AND PROHIBITIVE COST OF KEEPING CHILDREN IN ENGLISH SCHOOL HERE, URUGUAY DID NOT OFFER THEM A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.

7. RE FINAL SENTENCE REFTEL A, IMMEDIATE NEEDS, ASSUMING POSSIBILITY DEPARTURE FOR U.S. WITHIN A COUPLE WEEKS, WOULD BE AIR TRANSPORTATION FOR 25 PERSONS PLUS INITIAL RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT IN U.S. POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE ASSETS ARE TWO NEW AUTOMOBILES AND SOME RECENTLY ACQUIRED FURNITURE BUT THESE ARE OWNED BY KHMER GOVERNMENT.

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8. I EXPRESSED MY SYMPATHY TO AMBASSADOR ONG AND TO HIS PEOPLE AND SAID I WOULD SEEK GUIDANCE WITH RESPECT TO HIS REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE AND ASYLUM.

9. OBVIOUSLY, THE KHMER HERE WILL NOT BE FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM URUGUAY AND THEY HAVE FUNDS TO TIDE THEM OVER FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO GIVE THESE SUFFERING PEOPLE SOME PEACE OF MIND, I HOPE APPROPRIATE GUIDANCE AND HELP WILL BE

FORTHCOMING PROMPTLY.
SIRACUSA

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